

# INFORMATIONAL REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

Date: 3/23/09

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## SUBJECT: The AustinGO Web Site Redesign Project

The purpose of this informational report is to provide City Council with an update on the AustinGO Web Site Redesign Project, which has been a citizen and council engaged initiative since November 2007.

### **Background**

Launched in early 1995 as one of the few municipal government Web sites in the nation, the City of Austin Web site has grown from an initial 300 pages to over 80,000. The site provides the public an online portal to City departments, services and government functions. However, no significant update or corporate-level redesign has occurred since 2002.

Austin boasts a technologically adept, creative and active community; however the current City Web site does not reflect the culture, spirit and needs of our unique and vibrant City. The current Web technology used to publish content to the Web is 13 years old and has become a liability for the City to effectively manage the large amount of content that comprises the City Web site.

The AustinGO project is not simply about aesthetics or a short term fix for basic issues. This project is an essential first step for the City to catch up to best practices in both content production and technology infrastructure for the Web. It will provide the foundation upon which needed tools and services can be built—allowing the City to best engage and represent the community it serves.

### **City Staff Actions**

Since 2007, staff from the Communications Technology Management Department (CTM) and the Public Information Office actively participated in advancing the Web redesign project. Work officially began on Nov. 1 2007 when Austin City Council voted in support of a complete Web redesign utilizing the input of the community at every stage of redevelopment.

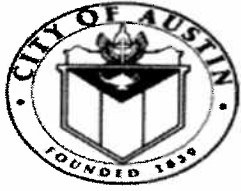
### **History**

An online survey taken by almost 2,000 participants was opened from Nov. 1, 2007, to Jan. 4, 2008. The survey measured how the average customer uses the Web and how they use the City Web site in particular. Paper copies of the survey were available for people to take without a computer, and both paper and online surveys were available in English or Spanish.

Six public town hall meetings were held from Jan. to Feb. 2008 in various geographic locations around Austin. The meetings provided opportunities for members of the community to share the concerns and outline their expectations for the Web redesign project. The meetings resulted in a comprehensive list of information and services that were of interest to members of the community and were compiled in a report that categorized common themes and goals.

Staff then began the process of meeting with representatives from each City department to share the findings from the survey and the town hall meetings. An initial review of department content,

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applications and business processes was also compiled at this time. Utilizing the public input data and the information received from departments, a business project map was compiled to detail the scope of the project.

The project map revealed that the size, scope and timeline of the project would exceed current City staff resources. To find the necessary experience, documentation and training required to successfully complete a project of this magnitude it was determined that assistance from a vendor would be required. At this time staff began the RFP process with the City Purchasing Office.

The RFP was written to include the following consulting deliverables:

- Installation and configuration of the Plone Content Management System
- Information architecture
- Redesign/Branding of the City Web site
- Content migration (moving the content from the old site to the new)
- Training and Documentation for City staff

The RFP for the Web redesign project was distributed in August 2008 and was returned with no successful bids. Another was issued in November 2008 and resulted in the identification of a successful candidate. The bids in the RFP ranged from \$700,000 to \$3,100,000. Of the three bids, the two higher bids were from Austin-based companies. One of those companies did not meet the financial services guidelines for financial solvency. The short-list of respondents met the necessary M/WBE requirements.

The Web site redesign contract of \$704,088 is funded by CTM in the amount of \$235,295; various enterprise departments are funding the remainder.

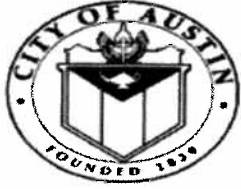
The Web site redesign project is budgeted in a Capital Fund. CTM's portion of the funding (\$235,295) comes from the City's General Fund Budget Stabilization Reserve Fund, which may be expended for replacement of capital equipment and projects of a one-time nature, such as, the Web site project.

### Ongoing

City Staff is active in the maintenance and support of the existing Web site as well as advancing plans for the overall City Web site design. In direct response to feedback received from the Austin Community the following improvement have been made:

- Improved search engine – An overwhelming complaint from users of the City Web site was the poor search engine. It has since been improved by use of Google Mini technology and is now a reliable navigation method.

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- Improved Analytics – Implemented Google Analytics to provide statistical information about how the City site is being used. Analytics are key in providing accurate data regarding usage trends and patterns and indicate ways to optimize the effectiveness of a site.
- Multimedia – Implementation of Flash Media Server to deliver more audio and video content on the Web.
- Video On Demand – An application that allows users to view past Austin City Council meetings at their convenience.
- Content Inventory and Archive – Large scale effort to inventory and archive old and outdated information from the current City Web site. Several thousand pages were archived totaling over 8 GB worth of content.
- Intranet site redesign – Utilized the Plone content management system to redesign the City's internal Web site.

In conclusion, the approval of this item on this week's agenda will allow the City of Austin to move forward with a leading municipal Web site that will provide increased community participation and engagement.